12: Evans Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1950 FL11 Luo FL11

MAN

A Monthly Record of Anthropological Science

000

Published under the direction of the

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

of

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

VOL. L

1950

Articles 1—272

With Plates A—L

Published by

THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

21 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1

General Agents: Francis Edwards, Ltd., 83 High Street, Marylebone, W.1

New York Agents: G. E. Stechert & Co.

And to be obtained at all booksellers

[Title Page]

12: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1950 FL11 Luo FL11

GHOSTLY VENGEANCE AMONG THE LUO OF KENYA

by

PROFESSOR E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford

000

[p.86a]

12: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936)1950
FL11 Luo FL11

775 133 In one form or another the word *cien*, and in some degree the notion of ghostly vengeance for which
171 it stands, have been recorded for a number of Nilotic languages: *cien* for the Shilluk and Nuer, *acien* for the Dinka, *acieni* for the Anuak, *tchien* for the Luo of the Bahr al-Ghazal, *lacen* for the Acholi, and *chyen* for the Lango.

753 Very little is known about this concept among the Luo of
755 Kenya. Roscoe (*The Northern Bantu*, 1915, pp. 285f. and
775 289) tells us that sickness may be due to a ghost, and that a medicine-man is consulted to find out which ghost is causing the trouble and the cause of its dissatisfaction. These troublesome ghosts are usually those of grandparents who afflict their grandchildren because their children have been neglectful of filial duties. The medicine-man orders a shrine to be built by the grave of the aggrieved grandparent and the sick person's father there offers a sacrifice. Ghosts may also possess persons and cause them to have fits. When a man kills another in war the ghost of the dead man is thought to cling to his slayer until it is released by ceremonies. Other writers on the Luo do not add to this information, and in view of our ignorance about the subject I record what few notes I have on it.

775 A troublesome ghost is called *jacien* (plur. *jociendi*), a
626 word translated 'devil' by the Fathers of St. Joseph's Society (*A Handbook of the Kavirondo Language*, 1920, p. 8). When a ghost is aggrieved it is unhappy among the dead and may cause injury to those who wronged it in life, the verb *cieno* and the noun *cien* being used to describe this ghostly vengeance. In the course of my inquiries I was told that the following are typical reasons for a dead person haunting a kinsman: a man is killed and his kinsmen do not exact vengeance or compensation for his death; a man dies unmarried owing to lack of cattle; a man is blamed for some action and commits suicide; a girl is forced into marriage and commits suicide; a son dies while resentful because his father has favoured his brothers; a married woman dies after being accused of witchcraft and beaten; a man dies in a state of shame for some action of his, or in resentment for some affront; a woman dies after an

[p. 86 B]

775 626 unsettled quarrel with her husband or one of her co-wives; and a ghost is forgotten by his kin. It is said that if a corpse smells it is a sign that the dead person is ill disposed. As the Luo regard the ghosts as one of the principal causes of sickness and other misfortunes and since it is believed that almost any wrong done to a kinsman may be punished by him after his death, it may be supposed that this representation is a powerful sanction of conduct within the family and kin. I was told that any old person who is neglected may cause a relative to be more attentive by the threat 'You will see me,' meaning that when the person is dead he will haunt those who have neglected him unless they make amends. People who are happy and contented in life do not cause trouble when they are dead. It is the disgruntled and resentful who cause trouble.

753 755 775 [787] Luo who fall sick get a diviner (*ajuoga*) to discover the cause, and if he says that the sickness is due to a particular ghost on account of some grievance they hasten to compensate (*colo*) the ghost for the wrong they have done him by sacrificing an animal or fowl at his grave. It is customary to sacrifice a quail or fowl for a sick woman and a sheep or goat for a sick man. When a beast is sacrificed it is first tethered while whoever is conducting the ceremony makes an invocation (*lamo*) over it. If the sacrifice is acceptable to the ghost the animal urinates. They then rub its back (*wiro*) with the moist earth where it has urinated, and afterwards sacrifice it. The meat is eaten by the sick man's kin and a strip of the skin is tied round his wrist.

755 775 If the *jacien* is not appeased by sacrifice they may get a magician called *mugalu* to protect the sick man's homestead. He buries a pot containing medicines in or just outside the homestead. If the ghost continues to cause trouble they summon an exorcist (*jadilo*). He first sacrifices an ox and warns the dead man that if he is not content with this sacrifice he will dig up his bones and burn them and throw the ashes into lake or marsh. Luo told me that they prefer to get a Bantu to do this for them, if it is found to be necessary, and that sometimes instead of digging up the dead man's bones the exorcist makes a hole in the grave and pours boiling water down it.

[p. 86 c]

775 It seems that normally it is only kinsmen who haunt a man, but any man who kills another, whether he be related
783 to him or not, is in danger of ghostly vengeance. For this reason a Luo does not care to spear an adulterer found with his wife. Also, as Roscoe says, a man who slays another in war may be injured by his ghost if certain rites are not performed. These purificatory rites, called *gut*, are conducted by a man, called *jagut*, who has himself killed a man and been through the ceremony. The slayer comes back from the fight to his homestead with a crowd of his companions, who make a demonstration there, singing and pulling out the eaves of his mother's hut. His father and mother strip themselves and cover their bodies with ashes. The slayer remains outside the homestead and there the *jagut* pierces the beak of a fowl and hangs it round his neck. He then cuts the beak of the fowl and it is killed when it falls. The slayer may now enter the homestead, but not through the gateway. A special entrance is cut for him through the euphorbia hedge which encircles the homestead.

[p. 87a]

775 He goes straight to the hut of the *pim*, the old woman
783 of the home, and there a goat is thumped and kicked to death. Afterwards it is skinned and cut open. The heart is extracted and bits of it are put by the *jagut* to the lips of the slayer and of some of his companions. He cuts strips from the skin of the goat and lays them along the backs of the slayer's fingers. He also gives the slayer medicines, among them a wild pig's tusk, which the slayer wears round his neck. The man is now purified and may drink milk again. [114] Roscoe's account is very different from that given to me by Luo, which I have recounted above.

775 Clearly there is much more to be discovered about Luo beliefs about ghosts than what I have recorded, but I can only add to my account that the word *jociendi* is sometimes used for ghosts in general—and not with special reference to troublesome ghosts—and that some ghosts appear to be thought to become nature spirits dwelling in water and in the air, and others to occupy the gourds used by diviners and to answer questions the diviners put to them.

[p. 876]